

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8419

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 14367

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, RP

SUBJECT: FURTHER PURGE COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS

REF: MANILA 14280

BEGIN SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT SLOWLY GRINDING TO HALT IN MANY LEVELS AS POST-PURGE PARALYSIS SPREADS. PURGE CURRENTLY IN REVERSE AS ERRORS EXPOSED, CORRECTIONS PUBLISHED, AND NO WORD OF FURTHER PURGE SURFACES. WE BELIEVE FLAK FROM SEPTEMBER 19 PURGE ACTION SO HEAVY AND UNEXPECTED THAT PRESIDENT LYING LOW TO ASSESS AND POSSIBLY RE-ASSESS FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT NO DOUBT WISHES NOW HE HAD NEVER STARTED PURGE IN FASHION HE DID, WE EXPECT HE WILL TRY TO CONTINUE SOME ELEMENTS OF PURGE BUT ON MUCH SLOWER, SMALLER AND MORE SELECTIVE SCALE. MILITARY ARE BIGGEST QUESTION MARK. SINCE FAILURE TO MOVE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WOULD DANGEROUSLY PROLONG PARALYSIS, PRESIDENT IS UNDER PRESSURE TO INDICATE NEXT STEP SOON. END SUMMARY.

1. POST-PURGE PARALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT HAS DEEPENED IN PAST WEEK. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT MAJOR DECISION MAKING IN BROAD SPECTRUM OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL OFFICES INCLUDING MILITARY, JUDICIARY, BUT EXCLUDING TECHNOCRAT AGENCIES (SUCH AS CENTRAL BANK, FINANCE, EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT) HAS VIRTUALLY GROUND TO HALT. OFFICIALS IN CHARGE RELUC-
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TANT TO ACT BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY CREATED BY PURGE,

EITHER BECAUSE OF FEAR THEY MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN LATER PURGES OR BECAUSE PURGES THAT HAVE ALREADY HIT THEIR OFFICES HAVE NUMBED/CONFUSED THOSE REMAINING. TO ADD TO IMPRESSION OF NUMBNESS EVEN AT HIGH LEVELS, PRESIDENT LEFT MALACANANG FOR VISAYAS QUIETLY DURING MID-WEEK.

2. ALTHOUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECRETARY RONO DID INDICATE REFTEL THAT HE PLANNED SMALL PURGE AT END OF YEAR, MOST EVENTS THIS WEEK HAVE INDICATED PURGE IN REVERSE. PRESS, FOR EXAMPLE, UNUSUALLY OUTSPOKEN ABOUT ERRORS IN COMPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT PURGE LIST, NOTING THAT SOME OF THOSE INCLUDED IN LISTS HAD DIED OR RETIRED SEVERAL YEARS AGO UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS. GOVERNMENT SUFFICIENTLY EMBARRASSED BY FALLACIES IN LIST TO PUBLISH TWO CORRECTIONS TO LIST, ONE COMPOSED OF 120 AND ANOTHER COMPOSED OF 35 OFFICIALS WHO HAD ERRONEOUSLY BEEN INCLUDED IN LIST OF ABOUT 2,000. AT SAME TIME, PRESS HAS REPORTED GOVERNMENT ON VERGE OF ESTABLISHING REVIEW PANEL IN MALACANANG TO HANDLE GRIEVANCE CASES OF LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS ON PURGE LIST. EMBASSY HAS HEARD OF NO OTHER IMMINENT PURGES INCLUDING MILITARY, ALTHOUGH MILITARY AND AS YET UNTOUCHED OTHER CATEGORIES NERVOUSLY AWAITING OTHER SHOE TO DROP.

3. WE UNDERSTAND DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE RETURNING FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10. WEEK HAS BEEN FULL OF RUMORS CONCERNING PROSPECTS OF BOTH ENRILE AND SECRETARY MELCHOR, ALTHOUGH NOTHING DECISIVE HAS BEEN REPORTED.

4. COMMENT: WE ASSUME FLAK FROM PURGES HAS BEEN SO HEAVY AND SO UNEXPECTED, PARTICULARLY FROM POWER BLOCS ALREADY AFFECTED OR ANTICIPATING ATTACK, THAT PRESIDENT HAS DECIDED TO LAY OFF FOR TIME BEING AND ASSESS AND POSSIBLY RE-ASSESS FUTURE COURSE. PUBLICIZING GOVERNMENT'S ERRORS IN PURGES UNUSUAL BUT PRESIDENT MAY HAVE FELT HE COULD NOT STOP DISCUSSIONS IN ANY EVENT AND MIGHT MOLLIFY SOME PEOPLE BY CORRECTIVE MEASURES. WHILE IT IS HYPOTHETICALLY CONCEIVABLE THAT MARCOS MIGHT WISH TO SILENCE ALL OPPOSITION BY RE-INVOCATION OF CAMP Crame MEASURES, WE THINK IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY HE WOULD
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DO SO VIEW IMAGE THIS WOULD PROJECT OF PRESIDENT WITHOUT POPULAR SUPPORT AFTER THREE YEARS OF NEW SOCIETY BLESSINGS. MOREOVER, UNLESS HE LIFTS MILITARY FROM THREAT OF PURGE, HE MIGHT NOT FEEL MILITARY TOTALLY RELIABLE FOR RE-INTRODUCTION OF SUCH REPRESSIVE STEPS.

5. WE BELIEVE MARCOS WILL CONTINUE PURGES BECAUSE HE HAS STARTED THEM AND BECAUSE HE WOULD LOSE GREAT CREDI-

BILITY IF HE ABORTED THEM NOW. FILIPINOS STRESS IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO MARCOS FOLLOWING UP CIVILIAN PURGE WITH MILITARY PURGE AND THEY NO DOUBT ARE LOOKING FOR OTHER OFFICES TO BE HIT AS WELL FOR ALL THE MALARKEY CONTAINED IN THE FIRST WAVE OF PURGES. ON OTHER HAND, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT IF MARCOS DOES PROCEED WITH PURGES HE WILL A) MOVE SLOWLY; AND WITH MUCH MORE DELICADEZA, B) ASK THAT ANY FUTURE LISTS BE VETTED TO EXCLUDE INAPPROPRIATE OFFICIALS, C) RESTRICT HIMSELF TO MUCH SMALLER NUMBERS AND TO LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS OR THOSE WITH DOCUMENTED RECORDS OF MALFEASANCE, D) MOVE PARTICULARLY CAUTIOUSLY AND VERY SELECTIVELY AGAINST THE MILITARY, WEIGHING ITS CONTINUED IMPORTANCE TO HIM AGAINST OUTSIDE PRESSURES TO PUNISH SOME ESPECIALLY NOTORIOUS SENIOR OFFICERS. IRONICALLY, GENTLY HANDLED PURGE OF FEW CHOICE MILITARY WOULD HAVE PROBABLY GOTTEN MORE, SAFER MILEAGE THAN ANYTHING HE HAS DONE SO FAR.

6. SHOULD MARCOS CONTINUE WITH PURGES, WE CAN EXPECT FURTHER PARALYSIS IN GOVERNMENT AT MOST LEVELS. MARCOS OBVIOUSLY FULLY AWARE OF THIS ASPECT AND PRESUMABLY WILL ATTEMPT TO RESTORE IMAGE OF FORWARD MOMENTUM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT KNOCKING OVER HORNET'S NEST AGAIN. PURGE'S PROGRESS SO FAR OBVIOUSLY RELATES AND IMPININGES ON MARCOS' STRENGTH AND FREEDOM OF ACTION AND WE WILL COMMENT LATER ON THIS ASPECT.
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